

WIKSTROEMIA PULCHERRIMA var. PETERSONII Deg. & Deg.,  
From Hawaii

Otto & Isa Degener

"The genus Wikstroemia in the Hawaiian Islands," released by the printer April 25, 1972 and published posthumously by Dr. Bo Peterson for the late Dr. Carl Skottsberg in Acta Soc. Sci. et Litt. Gothob., is a most meticulous monograph. It stimulated the kane and wahine writers to renewed field observations.

The kane writer's first glimpse of Dr. Skottsberg was many years ago. Studying for an advanced degree, the former was engrossed working up his earliest collections of Wikstroemia and other Hawaiian plants in the herbarium room of the New York Botanical Garden. Artist Mary E. Eaton had a high stool and high slanting drawing table facing the old Lorillard Snuff Mill, Dr. Per Axel Rydberg (1860-1931) had a large table at right angles to it and facing the window, and the kane student had a similar table next to that of Dr. Rydberg, one of his instructors. Dr. Rydberg stuttered a bit when dictating letters to Miss Nash, daughter of the agrostologist, recently deceased. When excited, his stuttering was severe and loud.

Carl Skottsberg of Sweden, with ruddy face, came to the Garden at that time with a formal letter of introduction to Director Britton (1859-1934). He was lifted upstairs by the elevator operator, and then ushered into the herbarium room where Dr. Britton was wont to work. Before Skottsberg spied Britton, he came face to face with Rydberg. We are not sure what happens when Greek meets Greek; but when Swede met Swede an excited, loud stuttering conversation in the native tongue reverberated throughout the hallowed herbarium. All botanical research ended on the top floor as all but one of the workers were fascinated by the conversation so replete with umlauts and other sounds not pronounceable in English. Finally exasperated, Dr. Britton stuck his head from behind a herbarium cabinet and shouted "Shut up or get out." Funereal silence followed.

More auspicious New York visits followed, in which the kane writer became well acquainted with Skottsberg. Such friendship was renewed and firmly cemented on Skottsberg's collecting trips in the Hawaiian Islands. He visited the ka-

ne's home on the north shore of Oahu. Although the latter already had had an assistant draw a Pupukea novelty for describing in his Flora Hawaiiensis, he abandoned all further work on the genus, resolving henceforth to siphon all representatives to Göteborg. Many years later, with Dr. Olof Selling, he visited Skottsberg's laboratory in Göteborg where Hawaiian Wikstroemia were growing out in the open!

Wikstroemia pulcherrima Skottsberg., at the time unnamed, had been observed by the kane writer as early as 1922, on the tawny volcanic ash plain at about 2,500 feet elevation. It grew almost gregariously on both sides of the "Belt Road," now officially named Mamalahoa Highway, on the southeastern flanks of Mauna Kea and Hualalai, Island of Hawaii. It is a xerophytic, single-stemmed "shrub" more or less prostrate or to about 7 dm., tall. It is strikingly ornamental when the wahine plant bears its abundant orange-red fruit. Having occasion to visit the general area November 27, 1971, the kane and wahine writers were distressed to note how these Wikstroemia plains had been devastated. It was not by the browsing of herds of Hereford cattle, which avoid eating the plant - the genus is rich in a poison that can be crystallized - but by their trampling. Luckily the road now has unusually ample shoulders. With the cattle fenced away, the Wikstroemia can be most conveniently studied here. Anticipating the extinction of this splendid species, the only one thus far studied with a chromosome count of  $N = 18$ , the writers resolved to collect material for herbaria of the World.

During our collecting we noted two taxa, one with small leaves and the other with larger ones. We found also a few transitional plants. Not able to distinguish from the monograph to what taxon Dr. Skottsberg's type specimen belongs, we wrote for information to Dr. Peterson, Botaniska Museet, Carl Skottsbergs Gata 22, Göteborg, Sweden. Receiving a brief analysis of the salient features of the type, we are convinced W. pulcherrima s.s., - more properly but awkwardly called W. pulcherrima var. pulcherrima - is the large leaved taxon. Armed with this knowledge, we herewith name the other:

WIKSTROEMIA PULCHERRIMA var. PETERSONII Deg. & Deg., var. nov. A specie foliis circa 2 cm. longis et 1 cm. latis.

Leaves elliptic to broadly elliptic, varying from 12-25 mm. long and 4-13 mm. wide but mostly 20 mm. X 10 mm. Flowers, as in the species itself, are abundant and greenish yellow. Whether the chromosome count applies to it, to the new variety or to both is presently unknown. All types, as we have mentioned before, are deposited in the New York Botanical Garden herbarium unless distinctly stated otherwise.

Type Locality: Degener & Degener 32,754. Along Mamalahoa Highway at Saddle Road Junction, Hawaii. On yellow Pahala ash plain at 2,600 feet; being exterminated by trampling cattle except between roadside fences. Nov. 27, 1971.



## PLANTS OF HAWAII

EX HERBARIUM OTTO DEGENER

32,754

*Wikstroemia spaldingii* (Hillebr.) S. Wats. Saddle  
Road Junction, Pahala, Hawaii. Nov. 27, 1971.  
Elev. 2,600 feet. Yellow Pahala ash  
plain; being exterminated by trampling  
cattle except between roadside fences.

COLLECTED BY OTTO DEGENER

AND SA DEGENER

Nov. 27, 1971

PLANT AND SOIL SAMPLES DEPOSITED IN THE "PLANT HERBARIUM" HERIOT-WATT  
UNIVERSITY, EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND



Flowers greenish yellow. *T. L.*  
 PLANTS OF HAWAII  
 EX HERBARIUM OTTO DEGENER

32,754  
*Wolstenholmia pulcherrima* var. *petersonii*  
 O. S. Peterson  
 Liliua, Kāneohe, Hawaii at  
 Saddle Road Junction, Hawaii.  
 On yellow *Polea* soil, plain at  
 base of *Polea* hills, Kāneohe, Hawaii.  
 Transplanted to  
 site between roadside, Dec. 25, 1949